

Continuing to Move Forward in Faith & Wisdom

Since FPC resumed in-person worship in June 2020, we have moved carefully and deliberately, with actions based upon our faith and the wisdom that the Lord provides to us through trusted advisors. Those incremental changes to our “guidelines for gathering” have served us well. We have been able to maintain a safe space for gathering for worship, for Wednesday night fellowship, and many of our children’s ministries. We have not seen, praise the Lord, major spread of COVID due to our church activities. The leadership of FPC, therefore, has carefully evaluated our next steps.

We realize that we will never please everyone....some feel we are far too stringent...some feel we aren’t doing enough. Nonetheless, we have based our guidelines upon the best sources of information and have spent many hours in prayerful contemplation. **Our overarching goal is that the body of Christ at First Presbyterian Church will gather for worship, discipleship and fellowship in a safe manner during this global pandemic.**

As we move into the new year, and begin planning our programming, we are making some modifications to our guidelines at a pace filled with grace.



1. **“Stand Up, Mask Up”**

- Entering/Exiting
- During Greeting/Fellowship
- During Singing
- Please make sure your mask covers your nose and mouth

We continue to hear from our local medical providers that the most significant way that we can reduce the spread of COVID as we gather together, is to wear masks/face coverings.

Therefore, we are asking that each person, (age 3 years and older), wear a mask upon entering/exiting the facilities, during times in worship when we ‘greet one another/pass the peace,’ and during singing.

2. **Social Distancing**

Sunday Worship/Large Groups will continue to be seated in King Hall or the Sanctuary by ushers.

Small group gatherings will continue to be arranged with chairs 6-feet apart.

On Wednesday nights, families who live together and/or folks who are around one another often, are seated non-distanced. It will be your responsibility to let our ushers know with whom you are comfortable sitting. (We will provide a way for you to indicate who you are comfortable sitting with on the Wednesday Night registration forms.). We will continue to have boxed meals and assigned seating.

3. **Hand Sanitization**

Clean your hands frequently...either with soap/water/friction or hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol.

We continue to have hand sanitizer throughout our campus, but Greeters will not be dispensing it as folks enter our facilities.

4. **Safe Screening**

We continue to ask our folks to 'self-screen' for symptoms of sickness and ask that they not attend any programs on our campus if they are feeling sick, if they have been recently exposed to someone COVID-positive, or if they have been asked to isolate/quarantine.

We will not be asking you to complete screening questionnaires.

We will not be doing temperature screening of children.

On December 14, 2020, CDC noted the limitations of symptom screening in children and adolescents. "Children infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 are more likely than adults to be asymptomatic or to have only mild symptoms....Symptom screening will identify only that a person might be sick, not that the person necessarily has COVID-19."

5. **Sanitizing our Facilities**

Our Custodial Team will continue sanitizing our meeting spaces between groups...wiping down surfaces and using a mist sanitizer are some of the ways this team works to keep us safe.

6. **Expanding our Ministry Programming**

In order to expand our Nursery/Children's ministry programming, we need more caregivers and teachers. We will also be expanding our coverage to accommodate caregiver/teacher absences due to quarantine/isolation.

Beginning in early February, we will be expanding our Nursery Care to ages 8 weeks to 5 years old for Sundays and Wednesday Nights.

Beginning in mid-February, we will be resuming our Sunday school for Children and our Wednesday Night programming...provided we are able to recruit a sufficient number of volunteers to teach. We must follow our Safe Ministry policy's teacher-child ratios.

Student Ministries will continue its core programming.

Adult Discipleship Ministry is planning to begin a Sunday Morning Community study in King Hall for adults in early February.

So Which of our Safe Gathering Practices have We Retired?

1. The tents outside our designated entrances have been taken down.
2. Our Greeters for Sunday Mornings will model Safe Gathering Practices by wearing a mask, but they will not wear gloves, nor will they distribute hand sanitizer. They will, however, greet folks warmly as they enter our facilities.
3. No screening questionnaires and no temperature checks for Nursery/Children's ministries. We are relying on parents to keep their children at home if they are sick.
4. Instead of being 'touch less,' we are going to be distributing paper worship bulletins. We are not yet, however, placing hymnals in the Sanctuary pews.
5. We are encouraging fellowship during worship and on Wednesday nights. By "masking up" each time we are standing, we are going to be able to leave our seats and greet/speak to others. This time of fellowship will only be comfortable for all of our FPC family if we abide by **"Stand Up, Mask Up."**

We continue to evaluate our practices prayerfully each day. As the situation in our community changes, we will respond accordingly.